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they are not a body with a recognized organization. Scattered over a wide expanse of country, they are, from this dispersion and this want, no less morally than physically isolated. There is no authority other than the temporary and shifting, although in some respects valuable one, of public opinion, by which their claims may be passed upon—no tribunal of their peers or of those of their own class to whose experience and judgment they would willingly defer—no representative council, the stamp of whose approval would be acknowledged by the public as well as by themselves. From the lack of such a centre of union, of communication, and of combined action, they, and with them the cause of truth and knowledge, and the public welfare, suffer. In the hope, therefore, of compassing these objects, we propose to establish a National Institute of Letters, Art and Science, upon a plan outlined in a Constitution accompanying this Circular. We ask your coöperation."

After several meetings a Constitution was finally adopted founded on that of the French Institute, but adapted to the genius of our country. Under this Constitution several Academies have been or will be organized, and their meetings will be held in New York City. The following officers of the Academy of Natural Sciences were elected: For President, Joseph Leidy, M. D.; for Vice President, John S. Newberry, M. D.; for Secretary, Charles A. Joy, Ph. D.; for Treasurer, J. Carson Brevoort, M. A. For members of the Council, Jeffries Wyman, M. D., and Spencer F. Baird.

If, as it promises to do, the National Institute will bind together and thus efficiently guide and control the army of workers in letters, science and art, a new era has dawned for the development of knowledge and its practical results in America. The National Institute certainly embraces the best talent and learning in the land; it only needs in addition, as has been remarked, an endowment of at least a million of dollars with which to begin its operations. At the outset it should place its officers on salaries, that their time may be devoted entirely to its service; should aid inquirers in making researches; should have the means of publishing its transactions and proceedings on a scale worthy of its liberal organization; and as its local habitation is in the city of New York, to the monied men of that great and wealthy city must it look for the moral and pecuniary support necessary for its life and final success. Such a National Institute in no way conflicts with the American Association for the Advancement of Science, which is a peripatetic body, meeting from place to place in the summer holidays, and we know of no other organization which would so fully meet the wants of the people.

ANSWERS TO CORRESPONDENTS.

J. F. A., Salem.—The presence of plants in sleeping rooms, is a thing to be avoided for several reasons. First, the leaves of growing plants, during the hours of daylight, constantly absorb a large amount of carbonic acid from the air; and this, by the action of the light, is decomposed; and the carbon goes to feed the plant, while the oxygen is exhaled. When light is withdrawn, this process stops, and any carbonic acid remaining undecomposed within the leaf-tissues is liable to escape again; thus to some extent, vitiating the atmosphere. This is not a great matter however, and indeed plants in *leaf only* are not chargeable with much of this kind of mischief. But plants in flower exhale carbonic acid freely at all times; for in all the processes connected with fertilization and fruiting, the starch and sugar found before in the tissues are being taken up and decomposed, part going to furnish the new products deposited in the seed, and part suffering complete reversion to its old form, first into acetic acid, and then into the original carbonic acid, which is thus plentifully thrown out upon the air, which has at the same time been robbed of a share of oxygen to effect the change. Besides the presence of carbonic acid, flowering plants yield exhalations of many essential oils, and natural odors of various sorts, all of which, in close situations, are liable to cause injury by long breathing, though some may be very pleasant when moderately employed. For these reasons it is understood at present that though plants in *leaf only* may be tolerated in sleeping rooms, yet they had better not be kept there, and no others should be at any time.—C. M. TRACY.

G. W. S., Grand Rapids, Mich.—The only work on American Spiders, is a series of illustrated papers, by N. M. Hentz, in the Journal (Vols. 1-6) and Proceedings (Vol. 11) of the Boston Society of Natural History. The best general works are Blackwall's Spiders of Great Britain, 4to, published by the Ray Society, London, and Histoire Naturelle des Araignées, par E. Simon. 8vo, with 207 figures. Paris, Roret, 1864.

J. W. J., Middleboro, Mass.—Your specimen is the *Botryllus Schlosseri*, a compound tunicate mollusk. It will be described and figured in the new edition of Gould's Invertebrates of Massachusetts.

W. H. D., Troy, N. Y.—Your specimen is the Hair-worm (*Gordius*). See NATURALIST, Vol. I, p. 556.

E. L. G., Decatur, Ill.—See Darby's Botany of the Southern States.

G. W. L., Long Point, Texas.—"I saw a hawk catch an owl the other day. Is it a common thing for hawks to catch owls?" We have not heard of such an instance before. Have any of our readers?

L. B. C., Richmond, Ind.—"I enclose you a strange piece of fungus found here. The piece is oval, and about four inches across the face. When first taken, of a snow whiteness, except at the point of each stalk, where there is a small pink speck. These pink specks have increased more than four times their original size since first taken (eight days). They have also grown darker red all the time. It was found growing point downwards, in the upper part of a cavity in a beach tree, still growing, about four feet from the ground."—It is a young specimen of the *Hydnum erinaceum*.—J. L. R.

W. C. J., Newburyport, Mass.—The specimen found in the stomach of the cod was a Sea-cucumber (*Pentacta frondosa*), which is abundant in ten fathoms, hard bottom, along our whole New England coast.

C. W., Weathersfield, Conn.—The minute insect infesting the pinks in your house, and which spins a thread like a spider, is a Mite (*Acarus*). The little pink mite does considerable damage to roses, spinning webs, and eating holes in the leaves. The best remedy is to apply powdered sulphur with a pair of bellows, for which contrivance several patents have been taken out.

J. A. H. B., Falkirk, N. B.—The works of Professor Baird comprise all you want. Apply to the Smithsonian Institution for "A List of the Birds of North America."

W. C. F., Eastham, Mass.— The bird is the Pine Creeping Warbler, *Dendroica pina*.

W. P. R., Richmond, Va.—The sphinx, which was broken in pieces, is the *Philampelus vitis* of Harris. We would like specimens for our museum.

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BOOKS RECEIVED.

List of the Shell-bearing Mollusca of Michigan, especially of Kent and adjoining Counties. By A. O. Currier. Published by the Kent Scientific Institute, Grand Rapids, Mich. 1868. 8vo, pp. 12.

American Bee Journal. January, 1869. Washington, D. C.

Cosmos. November 21; December 12. Paris.

Descriptions of twelve new species of Unionidœ from South America. Notes on some members of the Feldspar Family [with twelve other short articles extracted from the Proceedings of the Academy of Natural Sciences, Philadelphia]. Philadelphia, 1868. 8vo, pp. 32.

Future of Vineland. By Joseph Treat. 12mo, pp. 21. Price 15 cents.

Insect Extinguisher. By Joseph Treat. Vineland, N. J. 12mo, pp. 15. Price 12 cts.

Field. November 28, December 5. London.

Land and Water. November 7, 14, 21, 1868. London.

Chemical News. December, 1868. New York.

The Illustrated Annual Register of Rural Affairs for 1869, *with one hundred and thirty Engravings.* Albany, N. Y. Luther Tucker & Son. Price 30 cents.

Scientific Opinion. November, 1868. London.

Entomologist's Monthly Magazine. May-November, 1868.

Notes on the Later Extinct Floras of North America, with Descriptions of some New Species of Fossil Plants from the Cretaceous and Tertiary Strata. By J. S. Newberry. New York. 8vo, pp. 76.